



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Southampton City College

June 2010

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of Southampton City College carried out in June 2010

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure in the design and development of the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy ensures that this programme and its standards are properly aligned to comparable programmes elsewhere and to sector expectations
- the feedback to students in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy programme as its comprehensiveness and clarity enables students to identify and attain appropriately high standards as well as to identify areas for further improvement
- the College's staff development support for higher education staff ensures that high professional standards are maintained and that staff have appropriate subject knowledge and knowledge of higher education generally, including the Academic Infrastructure
- the commitment to resourcing higher education as it has developed across the College ensures standards and learning opportunities are well supported
- the virtual learning environment developed by the College, and the mechanism for encouraging and reinforcing the use of the virtual learning environment, facilitate good use by students
- the handbook for the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy is very well presented and contains much appropriate and useful information for students.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it would be **advisable** for the College to:

- ensure that student representation on the Higher Education Board of Studies is secured and that some training is given to student representatives on their role. This will ensure that the learner voice is captured in an effective way
- ensure that the HNC Building Services Engineering has the appropriate level of staffing to provide the necessary level of subject expertise and support for students.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- review the terms of reference and role of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure that it has a more prominent role in the quality assurance, management and spreading of good practice in higher education
- ensure that students and employers are more clearly informed about the process of upgrading assignments in the HNC Building Services Engineering through clearer communication
- seek ways to enhance its relationships with employers in the light of its stated mission to promote higher learning skills and to extend its higher education portfolio into niche markets
- consider in the light of the proposed development and expansion of higher education a differentiation, where appropriate, between the academic and pastoral tutorial function, to avoid any problems of resourcing tutorial support and/or role conflict or confusion
- review its policy on the provision of publicity information to ensure that full account is taken of the promotion of widening participation to the full range of prospective students, some of whom may not have access to internet facilities
- introduce a consistent approach to the design and content of course handbooks which embraces best practice in their higher education programmes, for example by dissemination of the good practice noted in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy
- develop an effective higher-level mechanism for checking the accuracy of all the public information it is responsible for publishing and consider whether this might be part of the augmented role of the Higher Education Board of Studies.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Southampton City College. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Middlesex and Southampton Solent Universities and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mrs Heather Barratt-Mold, Mr Harry Davison and Mr Rob Mason (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook) published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

3 Southampton City College is a medium-sized general further education college situated in the St Mary's area of the city of Southampton. The College is based on a single main campus in St Mary Street, Southampton, with a specialist marine technologies centre situated on the River Itchen a mile away at Woolston. The College is now completing the third phase of a five-phase campus redevelopment project which, when complete, will provide good-quality accommodation in a modern learning environment for the whole college. In 2007, the College merged with Southampton City Training to expand the delivery of work-based learning and Entry to Employment (e2e) provision. Southampton City College, through the City Training and City Business brands, is now responsible for all employer-responsive provision: apprenticeships, e2e, Train to Gain, further education National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace and commercial full-cost work with employers. In 2009-10 the College recruited 8,105 students (2,947 full time equivalents (FTEs)), of whom 171 students (102 FTEs) were in higher education programmes.

4 The following higher education programmes are provided by the College on behalf of the named awarding body:

Edexcel

HNC Electrical Engineering, years 1 and 2	16.15 FTEs
HNC Mechanical Engineering, years 1 and 2	13.87 FTEs
HNC Building Services Engineering, years 1 and 2	7.49 FTEs

Southampton Solent University

BA (Hons) Art and Design, year 0	60 FTEs
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City and Guilds

Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector	7.45 FTEs
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Middlesex University

BA (Hons) in Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy	18.38 FTEs
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Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

5 The College has partnership agreements with two higher education institutions, Southampton Solent University and Middlesex University, and with Edexcel. Partnership arrangements are based on clear memoranda of agreement that provide a good basis for mutual understanding and support. The BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy is a new course written and delivered by Southampton City College and validated by Middlesex University. The programme is overseen by the University's School of Health and Social Sciences, which offers a wide range of study opportunities at undergraduate and postgraduate level. For this programme, the College abides by the appeals and assessment processes of Middlesex University. The partnership is going well thus far. The university link tutor, external assessor, course staff and student representatives met for their first Board of Study in October 2009 and the feedback to the College from all concerned was positive.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6 The College has recently completed a realignment of its structures, driven by a number of internal and external influences. Within this it has recognised the importance of higher education and the need to sustain and develop this area of work. Higher education responsibilities have been made more explicit and stronger in changes to faculties and management roles within the College. Higher education provision is overseen by a senior manager, the Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum, who reports directly to the Principal. The curriculum is delivered through eight college faculties. The heads of faculty are involved in the strategic planning of higher education through the curriculum planning cycle. In addition, each faculty has a nominated curriculum middle manager or course leader to be responsible for the effective operation of higher education within the faculty.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team and the College organised focus groups to facilitate the process of canvassing representative views from the student body in higher education. The resulting submission was very helpful to the team, as was the meeting held by the team with students during the visit.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

8 The College has an effective generic reporting process for managing its provision and the higher education programmes are included in this. An Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum is responsible for the curriculum at level 2 and above, including higher education work, and reports directly to the Principal. Since the Developmental engagement, this Executive Director has become the nominated senior manager for higher education in the College and as such is responsible for all aspects of higher education and its development and standards. The role of the governing body, the

Corporation, includes setting the strategic direction and the curriculum character of the College. The Corporation sets college performance indicators as part of the annual cycle. These include success rates and are monitored regularly and frequently by curriculum leaders and the senior team. Curriculum developments are reported to the governors by the Executive Director and the Principal.

9 The Higher Education Board of Studies is a recent initiative and has already begun to have a beneficial impact on the management of higher education. It was established in 2009 as part of the action plan developed following the Developmental engagement. The Board reports to the Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum, who in turn reports on its activities to the monthly college Quality and Standards meeting. The Higher Education Board of Studies has overseen the Developmental engagement action plan and has been active in sharing good practice and in quality assurance. Each of the faculties with a higher education interest has a middle manager responsible for higher education who attends the Higher Education Board of Studies and then feeds back to the faculty. There was an expectation that there would be student representation on this Board, but as yet this has not happened, although there are student representatives for the various higher education programme committees. The terms of reference of the Higher Education Board of Studies are to be reviewed in order to strengthen its remit in quality assurance and improve the higher education provision at the College. The team concludes that the establishment of the Higher Education Board of Studies is a clear sign of the College's desire to strengthen the management of higher education, but that it is not yet fulfilling its full potential as a vehicle for promoting coherence, consistency and the dissemination of good practice across the College. The team recommends as desirable that the College review the terms of reference and role of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure that it has a more prominent role in the quality assurance and management of, and spreading of good practice in, higher education.

10 The College's Higher Education Strategy sets out a clear rationale for the acquisition of higher-level skills in response to local economic demand. The strategic drivers are the promotion of highly-developed technical and professional skills at all levels, employer responsiveness, and widening participation, by working through successful partnership arrangements. The Strategy is expected to lead to a range of short course and full-cost higher education and more than a doubling of enrolments to 500 in 2012-13.

11 The learner voice is valued and feedback actively sought in a variety of ways, from module evaluations to online questionnaires. The responses are analysed and collated so that they are useful in the production of the annual self-assessment process. In most programmes there is good feedback to students regarding 'you said - we did'. Students generally give a positive account of their experience at the College, although there are some exceptions.

12 The programme teams are responsible, with their awarding bodies, for the management of assessment. The course handbooks and supplementary materials clearly specify the assessment criteria and learning outcomes, which enable students to understand what is being assessed, how it is being assessed and how to achieve higher grades. There are assignment calendars available at the start of each programme. This is in response to the Developmental engagement action plan.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 Recently, Southampton Solent University has provided excellent staff development on the Academic Infrastructure. This has resulted in a greater understanding of the ways in which programmes were constructed by awarding bodies and a greater awareness of factors to be considered in the organisation and delivery of programmes. When writing the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy, the programme leader at the College paid close attention to the whole of the Academic Infrastructure, including the *Code*

of practice and benchmark statements, as well as the FHEQ. This is being used and shared as an example of good practice through the work of the Higher Education Board of Studies. In this case, there is clear reference throughout the programme handbook to the Academic Infrastructure. Furthermore the module narratives in this programme have been annotated to indicate where the assessment criteria align with the descriptors in the FHEQ. The team concludes that the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure in the design and development of the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy is good practice, as it ensures that this programme and its standards are properly aligned to comparable programmes elsewhere and to sector expectations.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

14 The partnership agreements and programme specifications clearly set out the College's obligations for meeting the requirements of the awarding bodies. Each of the programme areas has an assessment board held with its awarding body. Relationships between the Middlesex University link tutor and the College Curriculum Team Leader are very good.

15 There are external examiners/verifiers from the appropriate awarding bodies. The students are aware of the external examiners and their roles. In most cases the externals have met students from the provision on which they work; however, this is not the case for the HNC Building Services. External examiners' and verifiers' reports are mostly positive about the provision. An exception has been that for the Foundation Year BA (Hons) Art and Design, in which there were concerns over the maintenance of standards in the project element. This resulted in an immediate response from the College, but ultimately also a decision by Southampton Solent University not to continue with this programme. The team considered all the evidence in this case and concluded that, both in its robust handling of the University's concerns, as well as in appropriate responses, for example providing better accommodation and resources for this programme, the College showed itself willing and able to tackle difficult issues of standards and the quality management of higher education. As a result, there is every likelihood that the University will be able to restore partnership arrangements in the near future.

16 There are effective checks on feedback from external examiners and verifiers. External examiners' and verifiers' reports are monitored by the curriculum leaders and by the College Quality Manager. They are also referred to the Higher Education Board of Studies for review. Actions in response are the responsibility of the faculty, but checks are made by the Quality Assurance Manager following the half-termly Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan reviews. The College plans that the Higher Education Board of Studies will have a greater involvement with the higher education aspects of these reviews from 2010-11. There is an ongoing relationship with external examiners and verifiers which ensures that recommended actions are checked with them in between visits.

17 The internal verification process is effective. Assessments are internally verified before being released to students and then a sample of marked work is double-marked. In the Foundation Year BA (Hons) Art and Design all work is double-marked except in the module in contextual studies. Internal verification is difficult in some areas, where there may be only one or two members of staff to call on. As a result, the Higher Education Board of Studies has discussed criteria and ways to improve the effectiveness of this process and has started some peer internal verification.

18 Assessments are clearly set out in terms of what is required and how the assessment is to take place. Students are clear about assessment criteria, learning outcomes, deadlines and marking. The Developmental engagement action plan indicates

that marked work will be returned within 10 days. In practice this is variable between the different programmes and to some extent depends on the opportunities for further work in the HNC and the need to agree marks with partner institutions. This variability can range from around 10 days to several weeks. In the latter case, oral/informal feedback is usually available that helps with subsequent assessment work. In the HNC Building Services, the upgrading of assignments can be lengthy and the team recommends as desirable that students and employers receive a better understanding of this process through clearer communication.

19 The feedback provided to students on marked work is generally useful and helps them to improve. In the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy there is very good individual feedback, as well as group feedback for each assessment, and the method of marking is explicit. The team regards the feedback to students in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy programme as good practice, as its comprehensiveness and clarity enable students to identify and attain appropriately high standards, as well as to identify areas for further improvement.

20 The College has a number of partnerships that support delivery or provide good intelligence, especially with respect to the economic demands of the local area. These partners include employers and other providers and awarding bodies. Where the awarding bodies are Southampton Solent University or Middlesex University the link staff of each organisation visit each other to their mutual benefit. Edexcel provides not only assistance with staff training but also useful pro formas and guidance.

21 Retention and achievement rates are high, and there is generally sound management of standards by the College. There are good local progression routes for students on most of the programmes. Those on HNC programmes are generally in employment but are able to continue their studies locally should they want to, although further courses in building services are limited. Foundation Year BA Art and Design students are students of Southampton Solent University and progress within this University according to its regulations.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?

22 Support for staff development is excellent. It enables, for example, some individuals to pursue master's qualifications such as MA Art History, MSc Counselling and a level 7 management programme. There is a good mix of development in terms of generic higher education and subject-based provision. Staff are encouraged to attend workshops to enable subject updating, as well as in-house briefings such as those on the Academic Infrastructure and assessment and feedback mechanisms. There are also opportunities on the half-termly Self-Assessment Report days to undertake staff development. The team concludes that the College's staff development support for higher education staff is good practice, ensuring high professional standards are maintained and that staff have appropriate subject knowledge and knowledge of higher education generally, including the Academic Infrastructure.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

23 The arrangements described in paragraphs 8-12 also apply to the management of learning opportunities. Effective management and committee structures are in place to enable the College to manage the quality of learning opportunities of its higher education programmes on behalf of the awarding bodies. As with the management of standards, the introduction of a Higher Education Board of Studies following the Developmental engagement provides more focus on higher education within the quality cycle that focuses on learning and teaching, student support and resources. At an operational level, the management of learning is the responsibility of the heads of faculty and programme leaders. The College produces a quality improvement calendar for the academic year. Programmes are evaluated utilising programme reviews and monthly Quality Standard Monitoring meetings, which inform Subject Sector Area reports and the college Self-Assessment Report. Actions from this are reported to the Higher Education Board of Studies.

24 Student feedback and the observation of teaching and external examiners confirm that the College provides appropriate learning opportunities for students. Achievement of the stated learning outcomes and performance levels is reported at awarding body level and this is then reported at college level through the management structure and ultimately to the Corporation. These processes are working appropriately within the College and the team recognises that this is part of an evolving process, especially in relation to the role and function of the recently introduced Higher Education Board of Studies.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?

25 The obligations to the awarding bodies are set out in the agreements that the College has for the delivery of their awards. The College produces an annual report which considers external examiners' reports and student evaluation at unit/module and programme level. The quality of the learning opportunities is commented upon by the students both formally and informally. The students confirmed that they are able to raise both programme-related and personal issues through the tutorial system. The College has a formal student representative system for each programme and the students take forward areas for discussion. There is no guidance or information given in respect of the role of a student programme representative as it is seen as specific to each individual programme. There is currently no student representative on the Higher Education Board of Studies. The team recommends as advisable that the College ensures that student representation is secured on the Higher Education Board of Studies and that some training is given to student representatives on their role. This will ensure that the learner voice is captured in an effective way.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

26 As described in paragraph 13, the Academic Infrastructure is integrated into the current management and quality assurance arrangements, with the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice* relating to learning opportunities having been taken into account when a new higher education programme is devised and developed. The staff delivering higher education are well supported by the awarding bodies in respect of staff development in respect of the Academic Infrastructure.

How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

27 The College utilises a formal staff appraisal and peer observation of teaching system, student feedback, and quality assurance processes, including annual monitoring reports. Self-assessment with an action plan is a key aspect of the quality assurance framework. Programme teams evaluate the performance of their provision at programme level through course reviews, monthly Quality Standards Monitoring and the Self-Assessment Review. This feeds into the Higher Education Board of Studies.

28 Many college staff have formed close relationships with their related industries and some employers are involved in higher education curriculum development and work-based learning to ensure that the programmes are fit for purpose and fulfil the needs of industry. However, the employers whom the team met indicated that there are as yet insufficient formal mechanisms to utilise professional and industrial expertise and advice. The team thought it to be desirable that the College seek ways to enhance its relationships with employers in the light of its stated mission to promote higher learning skills and to extend its higher education portfolio into niche markets.

How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?

29 The programme teams are the main focus of student support and staff are able to respond effectively to students' needs because of the small class sizes. This was confirmed by the students. The College provides students with a specific college and programme handbook during induction. These are available through the college virtual learning environment. At this stage, they are also introduced to the available facilities of the awarding bodies. Students are directed by tutors to Student Support Services for learning, financial, and career information. Recently there have been problems associated with financial aspects of higher education support, but these have been addressed. The students are aware of and appreciate the support that is available to enhance their learning opportunities. Students are invited to offer their opinions on their learning experience and so contribute to the management of quality through a variety of mechanisms, including unit/module evaluations, City Vox and course representatives. Generally, students receive good levels of support from a variety of sources. However, the team concludes that in the light of the proposed development and expansion of higher education, it would be desirable for the College to consider, where appropriate, a differentiation between the academic and pastoral tutorial function, to avoid any problems of resourcing tutorial support and/or role conflict or confusion. At the present time the small numbers involved mean that this is not a problem, but as numbers grow staff may find that the tutorial function becomes more of a challenge.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

30 The College recognises the importance of staff development within higher education. Staff development needs are identified from various sources, including individual appraisals, teaching observations and developments in practice. Staff development has been noted by the team in paragraph 22 as an example of good practice. All the academic staff are encouraged to develop their subject knowledge and for some staff this includes participation at events at their awarding body that promote their better understanding of assessment and the challenge of teaching in higher education.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

31 The higher education and further education students share many of the same resources and facilities. The learning resources centre is open until early evening but not during weekends. Students can telephone for reservations and also view the catalogue online. The college library is responsive to students' and staff requests and provides support and guidance about information retrieval. For some programmes, students also have the use of the facilities at their awarding body/university. The College has generally responded very well to the challenge of providing good facilities and learning resources for higher education staff and students, particularly in its identification of dedicated or assigned accommodation for higher education within its new build. The team regards this commitment to resourcing higher education to be an example of good practice. However, there has been for some time a significant gap in the staffing for the HNC Building Services Engineering. Building services students, although very appreciative and supportive of the efforts of the programme leader, felt that up-to-date coverage of the curricula and their attainment of appropriate professional standards was being undermined by a lack of staff subject expertise. This is a matter that the team considered at length. The team views it as advisable that the College ensure that the HNC Building Services Engineering has the appropriate level of staffing to provide the necessary level of subject expertise and support for students.

32 The College has an award system in place for the use of the virtual learning environment. Programme sites are given a bronze, silver or gold award. The award is dependent upon the type of content that is provided and the level of interactivity that the site provides for students. The team regards this mechanism for encouraging and reinforcing the use of the virtual learning environment to be good practice. Students comment positively upon the virtual learning environment and the support that is given through this portal and records seen by the team indicate that good use is being made of this resource by many students. Discussion forums are also available on the virtual learning environment and are used effectively in some courses, for example on the City and Guilds Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy. Students on these programmes valued the forums, the support they receive from tutors using this feature, and the part they can play in the creation of the content of the learning material. The team regards the virtual learning environment developed by the College as good practice.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

33 The College is responsible for publishing and providing a substantial amount of public information on higher education for students, staff and the wider public. All is available on the college website. The College's policy is not to provide paper-based marketing and publicity material routinely. This has the potential to limit access to prospective students. However, the College provides paper-based information on request. In addition, marketing and publicity information is available at the college reception, local libraries, and college open days. Mailshots to selected local postcodes are also carried out. It is desirable that the College review its policy on the provision of publicity information to ensure that full account is taken of the promotion of widening participation to the full range of prospective students, some of whom may not have access to internet facilities.

34 The College also publishes a number of generic documents on its website, which apply to both higher education and further education. These include an admissions policy, disability statement, complaints procedure, and employer and student charters. In addition,

the College's mission statement appears on the website and in printed form at specific points round the campus. Overall, the review team found that the College's responsibilities for publishing public information about its higher education provision are fulfilled.

35 The partnership agreements between the College and Middlesex University and Southampton Solent University identify the joint responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information for which each is responsible. Under the standard Edexcel agreement, the College has responsibility for the preparation and publication of publicity and programme information for its Higher National courses. The College also has responsibility for similar information for its teacher training courses under a standard agreement with City and Guilds.

36 For the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy awarded by Middlesex University, the agreement covers such materials as the programme handbook, programme specifications, advertising and publicity. The College uses helpful university templates for producing handbooks and specifications and the content and accuracy of these is checked regularly and rigorously by the University. The handbook is very well presented and contains much appropriate and useful information for students. Discussions with students support this view. This is an area of good practice.

37 For the Foundation Year BA (Hons) Art and Design awarded by Southampton Solent University, a combined student handbook incorporating essential information about facilities, policies, procedures and regulations for each partner is produced. All these programme specifications are supplied by and are the responsibility of the University. Edexcel also checks the College's website at least once a year for accuracy of course titles which the College has been given approval to run. The relationships between awarding bodies and the College are effective in ensuring that each partner discharges its responsibilities for publishing public information.

38 Handbooks for Higher National courses are produced by the course teams responsible for their individual programmes. The minimum content is outlined in a generic checklist of headings provided by the College, under which teams produce information they consider appropriate for their course. Beyond this, course teams are allowed a degree of flexibility in the amount and depth of information which they incorporate. In most handbooks, teams generally include more than the minimum requirement in various formats and styles. While this extra content is useful for students, a more consistent approach to handbook preparation, style and subject matter would help in the management and monitoring of programme information that applies to students and their programmes. The review team considers that it is desirable for the College to introduce a consistent approach to the design and content of course handbooks which embraces best practice in their higher education programmes, for example by dissemination of the good practice noted in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy.

39 All courses publish their course handbook and assessment details electronically on the College's virtual learning environment. Some courses also upload teaching notes, worksheets and study guidance onto the virtual learning environment. Students can ask for course materials to be loaded onto their course pages on the virtual learning environment. Discussions between the students and the team confirm that they value this provision. Students also report that they find the virtual learning environment easy to access and navigate. They are made aware of course information and given guidance on access arrangements at induction at the start of their course. Students generally receive timely and accurate information about their courses. They are clear about who awards their qualification and their places of study.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

40 The College has an effective and systematic process for producing, publishing and checking information on new courses, course changes and withdrawn courses that appear on the college website. This starts with the completion of an electronic form by a curriculum team leader. The form is subsequently approved by the head of faculty and Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum, and forwarded to the College's marketing department. Course teams then add a course description using a set of standard headings. A further check is then carried out before the details are loaded onto the college website. Subsequent accuracy checks are carried out twice a year in meetings between the heads of faculty, the Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum, and representatives of the marketing department. There are appropriate links and references to awarding bodies for courses listed on the website. Reviewers confirm that information carried on the website for each course is accurate.

41 For information other than that published on the website, the College does not currently have a formal mechanism for scrutinising the accuracy and completeness of the full range of higher education academic information it has the responsibility for publishing. However, the College's recently formed Higher Education Board of Studies has become involved in scrutinising some areas of public information for accuracy. For example, student handbooks were considered at a recent meeting. College staff recognise that further discussions are desirable to determine how it can become more effective in this scrutiny role. The team considers it desirable that the College develop an effective higher-level mechanism for checking the accuracy of all the public information it is responsible for publishing and considers that this might be part of the augmented role of the Higher Education Board of Studies.

42 Minimum requirements and target dates are set for course documentation to be loaded onto the virtual learning environment platform. These include course handbooks, timetables and assessment schedules for the first semester, by September of the current academic year. Programme content is monitored half-termly by the College's e-learning developer, who sends reports to heads of faculty, who in turn evaluate the quality of the documents. These are subsequently discussed and reviewed with individual staff in their performance management process reviews. Staff value the process and find it a motivating experience.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

43 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2009. The lines of enquiry were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: How successful is the College in ensuring that there are explicit and effective links between teaching, learning and assessment that are understood by students?

Line of enquiry 2: How well does the College communicate feedback on assessment outcomes to students in order to underpin standards and promote learning?

Line of enquiry 3: Are students able to gain access to comprehensive and accurate information about higher education courses and their assessment at the College?

44 The Developmental engagement review team found some good practice in the conduct of assessment at the College, including the effective involvement of employers in the development of student handbooks and assessments in Edexcel Higher programmes; the arrangements for internal verification/moderation of higher education assignments; and the constructive feedback in the Certificate in Education, with comments referenced to annotated scripts.

45 The team made a number of recommendations advising the College to take action, including the need to take measures to improve the understanding of and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure by curriculum staff, the need to assign responsibility for matters of overall consistency of practice in assessment to a senior manager, and the need to ensure that constructive and timely feedback is provided to support students' learning in all curriculum areas. The team also made some recommendations that were seen to involve desirable actions, including ensuring the sharing of good practice in higher education across the College in order to aid the development of a greater level of consistency across all aspects of assessment and regarding the need to ensure that staff development provision supports staff in devising effective formative and summative assessment for higher education.

D Foundation Degrees

46 The College does not currently offer Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

47 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Southampton City College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies.

48 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure in the design and development of the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy ensures that this programme and its standards are properly aligned to comparable programmes elsewhere and to sector expectations (paragraph 13)
- the feedback to students in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy programme as its comprehensiveness and clarity enables students to identify and attain appropriately high standards as well as to identify areas for further improvement (paragraph 19)
- the College's staff development support for higher education staff ensures that high professional standards are maintained and that staff have appropriate subject knowledge and knowledge of higher education generally, including the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 22)
- the commitment to resourcing higher education as it has developed across the College ensures standards and learning opportunities are well supported (paragraph 31)
- the virtual learning environment developed by the College, and the mechanism for encouraging and reinforcing the use of the virtual learning environment, facilitate good use by students (paragraph 32)

- the handbook for the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy is very well presented and contains much appropriate and useful information for students (paragraph 36).

49 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

50 The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that student representation on the Higher Education Board of Studies is secured and that some training is given to student representatives on their role. This will ensure that the learner voice is captured in an effective way (paragraph 25)
- ensure that the HNC Building Services Engineering has the appropriate level of staffing to provide the necessary level of subject expertise and support for students (paragraph 31).

51 The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- review the terms of reference and role of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure that it has a more prominent role in the quality assurance, management and spreading of good practice in higher education (paragraph 9)
- ensure that students and employers receive a better understanding of the process of upgrading of assignments in the HNC Building Services Engineering through clearer communication (paragraph 18)
- seek ways to further enhance its relationships with employers in the light of its stated mission to promote higher learning skills and to extend its higher education portfolio into niche markets (paragraph 28)
- consider in the light of the proposed development and expansion of higher education a differentiation, where appropriate, between the academic and pastoral tutorial function, to avoid any problems of resourcing tutorial support and/or role conflict or confusion (paragraph 29)
- review its policy on the provision of publicity information to ensure that full account is taken of the promotion of widening participation to the full range of prospective students, some of whom may not have access to internet facilities (paragraph 33)
- introduce a consistent approach to the design and content of course handbooks which embraces best practice in their higher education programmes, for example by dissemination of the good practice noted in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy (paragraph 38)
- develop an effective higher-level mechanism for checking the accuracy of all the public information it is responsible for publishing and consider whether this might be part of the augmented role of the Higher Education Board of Studies (paragraph 41).

52 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

53 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Integrated quality and enhancement review

54 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Southampton City College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:	Good practice actions to be monitored by the chair of Higher Education Board of Studies (HEBoS)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure in the design and development of the programme in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy ensures that this programme and its standards are properly aligned to comparable programmes elsewhere and to sector expectations (paragraph 13) 	To have an annual 'refresher' and sharing good practice workshop session on the Academic Infrastructure	January 2011	HEBoS (Chair)/Staff Development Manager	All relevant staff attend	Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum/ HEBoS	Via quality monitoring processes (Quality Standards Monitoring/ HEBoS) and in assessment board reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the feedback to students in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy as its comprehensiveness and clarity enables students to identify and attain appropriately high standards as well as identify areas for further improvement (paragraph 19) 	The team will continually review their processes and involve student feedback. Any changes in good practice to be shared with all teams across higher education	Ongoing (via quality days in each term)	Programme Leader – BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy	High level of positive feedback via individuals and groups of students	Head of faculty - via quality reports	Via quality cycle and reports to HEBoS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's staff development support for higher education staff ensures that high professional standards are maintained and that staff have appropriate subject knowledge and knowledge of higher education generally, including the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 22) 	<p>The College will continue to give high levels of support for the development of staff. This will be both as individuals and as teams to ensure high quality teaching and learning for all students</p>	<p>Ongoing. Teams to produce a higher education development plan via the appraisal process for individuals and from the self assessment reports for team development</p>	<p>Head of faculty/Staff Development Manager</p> <p>Head of faculty to review plan with Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum in May each year for resource planning purposes</p>	<p>Level of training and support undertaken and given. Cross-referenced against actions in teams quality improvement plans to underpin improved performance</p>	<p>Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum/ Staff Development Manager/ HEBoS</p>	<p>Via HE self-assessment reports and the appraisal process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the commitment to resourcing higher education as it has developed across the College ensures standards and learning opportunities are well supported (paragraph 31) 	<p>To ensure curriculum planning takes full account of the resource needs of higher education. Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum reviews the learning resource need on a quarterly basis</p>	<p>Ongoing - monitored by quarterly reports from curriculum reviews</p>	<p>Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum</p>	<p>High levels of student satisfaction with learning resources</p>	<p>Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum/ HEBoS</p>	<p>Curriculum HE planning review at Senior Leadership Team Strategic review held in April each year</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the virtual learning environment (VLE), developed by the College, and the mechanism for encouraging and reinforcing the use of the virtual learning environment facilitate good use by students (paragraph 32) 	<p>Continue to develop the range of learning opportunities available via the VLE. Set a target of getting all HE courses to silver with at least 20% at gold by summer 2011</p>	<p>July 2011</p>	<p>Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum/ Learning Technologies Manager</p>	<p>All courses at silver and 20% at gold</p>	<p>HEBoS</p>	<p>Curriculum HE self-assessment reports</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the handbook for the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy is very well presented and contains much appropriate and useful information for students (paragraph 36). 	Team to review handbook content to ensure good standards are maintained. The team will share template with other teams to enable more consistent practice across college	Ongoing - reviewed August each year	Programme/ course leaders	Accuracy maintained	Head of faculty	HEBoS (Special handbook review meeting in August each year)
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed upon a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:	Advisable actions to be monitored by Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that student representation on the Higher Education Board of Studies is secured and that some training is given to student representatives on their role. This will ensure that the learner voice is captured in an effective way (paragraph 25) 	At least two representatives from the student body will be invited to sit on HEBoS from October 2010. A relevant induction plan for the two students will be drawn up and support given from the staff development team	October 2010	Chair of HEBoS	Two students are actively involved and contributing to the HEBoS meetings	Chair of HEBoS	Student feedback/ minutes of meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the HNC Building Services Engineering has the appropriate level of staffing to provide the necessary level of subject expertise and support for students (paragraph 31). 	Review of staffing levels on this programme. New recruitment drive by Human Resources to fulfil vacancy	ASAP	Director of Organisational Development	New staff in place	HEBoS	Student and employer feedback

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:	Desirable actions will be monitored by Director of Organisational Development					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the terms of reference and role of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure that it has a more prominent role in the quality assurance, management and spreading of good practice in higher education (paragraph 9) 	HEBoS to meet and rewrite terms of reference for academic year 2010-11	August 2010	Executive Director for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum	New terms agreed and in place by September 2010	HEBoS	HEBoS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that students and employers receive a better understanding of the process of upgrading of assignments in the HNC Building Services Engineering through clearer communication (paragraph 18) 	Building Services team to write clearer guidance on assessment strategy in handbook and on assignment front sheets. Make sure that employers have a copy of these documents and understand the new process.	September 2010	Programme Leader - Building Services	New guidance in place. Understood by both students and employers	HEBoS	Curriculum HE self-assessment review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seek ways to further enhance its relationships with employers in the light of its stated mission to promote higher learning skills and to extend its higher education portfolio into niche markets 	The College will arrange a number of employer forums. These would be a mixture of face to face meetings and online communications. All curriculum teams to	June 2011	Programme leaders	All areas have clear strategies on involving their main employers in both planning and delivery of the curriculum	Head of faculty (via self-assessment reviews and quality improvement action plans)	HEBoS

(paragraph 28)	set targets on visiting lectures with a direct employer involvement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider in the light of the proposed development and expansion of higher education a differentiation, where appropriate, between the academic and pastoral tutorial function, to avoid any problems of resourcing tutorial support and/or role conflict or confusion (paragraph 29) 	<p>The curriculum will review its current provision for tutorial services to students. This will initially take place at team level. The second stage will be to map the type of provision and its delivery platforms to find common ground. Thirdly, the curriculum representatives on HEBoS will draw up a list of recommendations for implementation in 2011-12. This process will include student forms at each stage to take account of their views at the various stages and help in the final recommendations</p>	August 2011	Team leaders/ heads of faculty/HEBoS	Recommendations in place by summer 2011 for changes to tutorial processes for HE students in September 2011	HEBoS	Curriculum HE self-assessment reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review its policy on the provision of publicity information to ensure that full account is taken of the promotion of widening participation to the full range of prospective students, some of whom may not have access to 	Publicity strategy is reviewed annually by Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Ongoing - main review is each December at SLT conference	SLT	Recruitment targets by categories are met	SLT/heads of faculty	Curriculum planning cycle

internet facilities (paragraph 33)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce a consistent approach to the design and content of course handbooks which embraces best practice in their higher education programmes, for example by dissemination of the good practice noted in the BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy (paragraph 38) 	HEBoS will have a special meeting in August each year to look at and moderate handbooks to ensure best practice across the college	August 2010	Programme leaders/heads of faculty/ Marketing Web Developer	Handbooks are accurate Student feedback is positive	HEBoS	Curriculum HE Self-assessment reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop an effective higher-level mechanism for checking the accuracy of all the public information it is responsible for publishing and consider whether this might be part of the augmented role of the Higher Education Board of Studies (paragraph 41). 	Marketing will carry out a proofreading exercise before any handbooks are printed and/or put on the website/VLE	August 2010	Programme leaders/heads of faculty/ Marketing Web Developer	Handbooks are accurate	HEBoS	Curriculum HE self-assessment reviews

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